

POLICY AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the
POLICY AND PERFORMANCE
COMMITTEE held in the Fire Authority
Rooms, Fire and Rescue Service
Headquarters, Nissan Way, Barmston
Mere, Sunderland on MONDAY 26
OCTOBER 2009 at 10.30 a.m.

Present:

Councillor N. Forbes in the Chair

Councillors Boyes, Mortimer and Wright.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillor Clare, Val Bowman and Lindsey Horwood.

Declarations of Interest

None.

Minutes

7. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Performance Committee held on 27 July 2009 (circulated) be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Update

Page 5, LI1 3.1% of Fires attended in Dwellings where No Smoke Alarm was Fitted

The Chief Fire Officer referred to a question from Councillor N. Forbes regarding a breakdown of information from the system on housing tenure where accidental fires had occurred and confirmed that currently this information could not be captured, however the Authority were in negotiation with the software company to enable the information to be secured in the future.

Page 5, LI21 Number of Malicious False Alarm Calls Attended

The Chief Fire Officer reported that discussions had been held with control room staff and actions had been included in the Performance Report.

Q2 (April – September) Performance Report 2009/10

A joint report was submitted by the Chief Fire Officer, the Clerk to the Authority and the Finance Officer on the Quarter 2 (April – September) performance of the Authority against the targets for 2009/10.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The following key issues were highlighted:-

NI49iii Number of Non-Fatal Casualties (excluding precautionary checks) due to Primary Fires per 100,000 Population (LI28)

The Authority had recorded 3.0 (33) non-fatal casualties due to primary fires per 100,000 population at the end of Q2 2009/10, a reduction of 21% compared to the same period in 2008/09.

As a result of this performance the Authority was forecast (6.1) to exceed the 2009/10 target (6.4) by 5%.

Preventative education combined with the “safety net” of fitting smoke detection would be taken to address these issues.

Councillor Mortimer expressed concerns regarding a resident in sheltered accommodation who had caused a number of chip pan incidents. The Chief Fire Officer suggested that the details be shared with the Fire Authority for action and to enable a safety check to be undertaken.

Members expressed concerns that a number of fires were caused by older people smoking and Chris Maude undertook to investigate the number of fire incidents caused by cigarettes and smoking.

Joy Brindle commented that the Authority was conscious that the statistics pointed to an ageing population and that would be taken into account in the forward planning of the Authority.

NI33(i) Number of all Deliberate Fires per 10,000 Population (LI33)

The Authority recorded 32.1 (3498) deliberate fires per 10,000 population by the end of Q2 2009/10, an increase of 7% compared to the same period in 2008/09. As a result of this performance the Authority was forecast to miss its target (62.6) by 3%. Based on the forecasted year end performance, the Authority was forecast to report a reduction on its 2008/09 figure of 64.6. The Authority's forecasted year end performance (64.2) compared to the other Mets was above the average figure of 51.5 and had exceeded the worst quartile by 2%.

As in Q1 2009/10 the Sunderland district had recorded the highest number of deliberate fires, accounting for 34% of the Service total.

Compared to Q1 2009/10 (487), the Newcastle District had recorded the largest increase in number of deliberate fires by the end of Q2 2009/10 (932).

Chris Maude stated that loose rubbish accounted for 40% of the incidents. Chris Lowther reported that areas of concern had been identified in Newcastle, Sunderland and Gateshead and this was part of broader anti-social behaviour problems.

Police in Sunderland had put in resources to the hotspot areas to identify and arrest offenders and were working with the Fire Authority. In Sunderland, Gentoo had given warnings to residents in the risk areas.

In Gateshead and Newcastle, organisations were working in partnership to solve problems on the ground and the use of wheeled bins. Councillor N. Forbes questioned why there was an increase in deliberate fires in some areas and stated that a whole range of factors could have consequences and link into the work undertaken by the Local Strategic Partnership.

Councillor Wright reported that he had been informed by a number of older residents in Sunderland that the larger wheeled bins were too heavy and relatives were putting out wheeled bins earlier than the delivery date.

Councillor Forbes commented that Newcastle City Council had increased the number of wheeled bins in the City and it would be useful to discuss the risks with the LSP and Fire Authority.

Joy Brindle confirmed that the Fire Authority would hold discussions with the Local Strategic Partnerships and the City Councils regarding advice on the collection times for wheeled bins.

LI22.1 Number of false alarm cases due to automatic fire alarms from non-domestic premises per 1,000 non-domestic premises

The Authority had attended 51.8 (1627 alarms) false alarm calls due to automatic fire alarms from non-domestic premises per 1,000 non-domestic premises, an increase of 22% when compared against the same period in 2008/09.

The district of Newcastle had reported the greatest number of such incidents by the end of Q2 2009/10, with 77.3 per 1,000 non-domestic premises. In total 65% (266 calls) of such calls attended by the Authority were to the same premises on more than one occasion.

A report was being produced to highlight the performance of the Service, Districts and Stations during 2008/09 and recommendations and findings would be used to improve on the performance highlighted above.

The Chief Fire Officer reported that the hospitals continued to be the key challenge and work was ongoing to reduce the number of false alarm calls.

Councillor N. Forbes asked if the hospitals had incorporated the number of false alarm calls into their strategic plans and the Chief Fire Officer stated that the issue had been discussed with the Hospital Trusts at a higher level but that the inclusion of this in their strategic plans was currently not known. Joy Brindle undertook to check with the Hospital NHS Trusts.

8. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the contents of the report be noted and endorsed; and
- (ii) the publication of the Performance Report be agreed.

Transfer of Ownership of New Dimension Assets

A joint report was submitted by the Chief Fire Officer, the Clerk to the Authority and the Finance Officer (copy circulated) on the transfer of ownership of New Dimension Assets together with correspondence from the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) in respect of the transfer.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Chief Fire Officer reported that the information provided by CLG in their letter of the 22 July 2009 and the subsequent Fire Service Circular had attempted to address those issues of concern that were highlighted by this and other Fire and Rescue Authorities.

The assurance provided by CLG in respect of future funding was to be welcomed. However, an absolute guarantee of funding across the lifetime of the programme could not be provided, which meant that there was a risk, however small, that some costs might fall on the Fire Authority at some point in the future.

In reply to a question from Councillor Mortimer it was confirmed that legal advisors had and were continuing to consider the implications through the Fire and Rescue Authorities Lawyers' network.

A further report was to be submitted to the Authority in December 2009.

9. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the contents of the report be noted; and
- (ii) further reports be received as appropriate.

Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006

At the instance of the Chairman, it was:-

10. RESOLVED that in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 the public be excluded during consideration of the remaining business as it was considered to involve a disclosure of information relating to consultations/negotiations in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the Authority and employees of the Authority (Local Government Act 1972) Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, (Schedule 12A), Part 1, Paragraph 4).

(Signed) N. FORBES,
Chairman.

Note:-

The above minutes comprise only those relating to items during which the meeting was open to the public.

Additional minutes in respect of other items are included in Part II.